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DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

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Addendum

REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

A. Review and assessment of efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities

1. At its 7th and 8th meetings, on 18 May 1995, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Review and assessment of efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities" (A/49/423).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed their thanks to JIU and many of them qualified the report as a clear, succinct and high-quality analytical document as well as a valuable contribution to the current restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat. They shared most of the conclusions and recommendations of JIU, but some delegations expressed their reservations with regard to recommendations 2 and 3 and requested clarifications as to whether implementation of these recommendations would have financial implications and lead to creating additional posts in the Secretariat. One delegation queried what was the legislative mandate for strengthening the regional commissions. Some delegations expressed the view that the regional commissions must undergo further reform before additional resources or remits could be considered.

3. Recommendation 1. Commenting on this recommendation, several delegations referred to a number of reasons explaining the slowing down of the current restructuring exercise, in particular, objective difficulties as well as an apparent lack of interest of Member States towards restructuring, a kind of restructuring fatigue. Some delegations, while mentioning that restructuring should be carried out cautiously and through a step-by-step approach, stated that restructuring of the economic and social sectors, as defined in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, should be completed. They believed that more active involvement of Member States was essential in this regard and that those States should not abdicate their responsibility to give guidance to the Secretary-General. Some delegations said that further analysis of the virtues of decentralization was required before taking further action.
4. Recommendation 2. Several delegations referred to the necessity of having an overall framework for restructuring as well as a strategic analysis and strategic planning facility in the United Nations Secretariat. Some delegations, while being in agreement with the recommendation in principle, wondered whether implementation of this recommendation implied creating new posts in the Secretariat and whether such a facility was not already existent within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The Chairman of JIU clarified that the Unit did not recommend that new posts be created but that this function be strengthened and articulated through streamlining the Secretariat and making better use of in-house expertise.
5. Recommendation 3. With regard to this recommendation, it was clarified that JIU recommended not the establishment of a new post but the designation of "a competent senior official with extensive managerial experience, who will be a focal point and held accountable for the firm implementation of the current restructuring process". While acknowledging that this recommendation had been valid when the report was drafted, the function it referred to had been exercised by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. In the view of several delegations, it should not be a focal point but rather the Secretariat entities concerned which should be automatically responsible and held accountable for the implementation of the relevant decisions taken by Member States.
6. Recommendation 4. Several representatives stated that the report mentioned in the recommendation was long overdue.
7. Recommendation 5. Several delegations supported the idea that the regional commissions should increasingly concentrate their resources on priority areas where they could make a unique and significant contribution and either readjust or abandon activities which did not fall into this category. Some delegations held the view that additional efforts were needed on the part of the regional commissions to do away with obsolete and marginal programmes. Several delegations also shared the view that the commissions should improve their performance and strive to become centres of excellence for specific activities in their respective regions. In this context, the necessity of a better use of the regional commissions' comparative advantages and enhanced cooperation with other multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations was emphasized.

8. Recommendations 6 and 7. These recommendations found general support from the Committee. One delegation was of the opinion that regional commissions should concentrate on coordination of the operational activities of other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations and on analysis in fields in which they have significant comparative advantage and in which they could become real centres of excellence.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee generally commended the report, which it found to be very clear, analytical, comprehensive and useful.

10. The Committee endorsed the report of JIU, taking into account the views expressed in the discussion section.

B. Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system

11. At its 7th and 8th meetings, the Committee had before it the report of JIU entitled "Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system" (A/50/126-E/1995/20) and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) thereon (A/50/126/Add.1-E/1995/20/Add.1). The Committee also had before it the written presentation provided by the Unit.

12. Many delegations acknowledged the innovative framework of the report, while noting that the concept of "communication for development" needed additional clarification. Some delegations stressed that the report should have addressed more thoroughly the important role of telecommunication. One delegation characterized the report as being slightly out of focus, and said that it could be improved as the basic concept is clarified. Another delegation inquired to what extent communication as a process was being utilized within the United Nations system to enhance coordination.

13. Recommendation 10. Concerning the assertion in recommendation 10 of the report that "The United Nations has no specific structure in place for immediate action to deal with communication when a peace-keeping operation emerges", several delegations took exception. Noting that the above recommendation had already received the support of ACC, a number of delegations expressed the view that the subject-matter of the reform needed further study.

14. Some delegations questioned the appropriateness of linking peace-keeping operations and development in recommendation 10. They also underscored the sensitive nature of this recommendation, particularly the implication for political issues. In this connection, another delegation expressed the opinion that the "stand-by unit of communications experts" called for should report to the Department of Public Information.

15. Many delegations said that they had to obtain instructions from their capitals with respect to recommendation 10 of the report. While one delegation supported the thrust of recommendation 10, most delegations had particular reservations with it.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. The Committee took note of the report.
